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Self-Help Housing families in Junction City move into 83 their new homes

Junction City, KS – USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks joined City officials in welcoming six Junction City families into their new homes during the ribbon cutting held Saturday. The families were the latest participants to construct their own homes under the Agency's *Mutual Self-Help Housing Program*. In all, 36 new homes have been constructed by families in Junction City who have participated in this USDA housing program.

State Director Banks commented during the ceremony, "Supporting critically needed economic development opportunities for Kansas is directly tied to increasing the availability of affordable housing. USDA Rural Development helps over 7,000 rural Kansans annually to secure either individual homeownership or multi-family housing residency. Junction City continues to play a vital role in serving the Agency's single family and multi-family loan program customers. Homeownership is an important first step to enjoying personal economic prosperity."

Todd Fike, construction manager for the Self-Help program in Junction City stated, "I have been especially impressed with the families' willingness to do whatever it takes to get these homes built. All of them have had to learn new skills, but they have banded together heart and soul to finish all the homes and to provide a quality product. Some days, the work was more difficult than they thought it would be, but they didn't quit. They have supported each other throughout the process. I am confident that they will remain friends for a long time, as well as being good neighbors."

Specialist E4 Alper Kontente, who participated in the *Mutual*

Self-Help Housing Program, recently returned to Fort Riley from an assignment in Iraq and was on hand for the celebration. He had applied for a USDA loan to finance his family's home while he was deployed. Kontente remarked, "I never thought it would be so easy to start the process while I was out of the country. The USDA staff made the application process quite easy. They were willing to go above and beyond their normal routine to assist me in every way possible. I was pleasantly surprised by their expertise and friendly manner."

After the ribbon cutting ceremonies, ground was broken for six additional houses for completion

during 2007. Self-Help Housing of Junction City serves as one of USDA Rural Development's technical assistance partners across the state for the *Mutual Self-Help Housing Program*. Junction City has administered this USDA program since July 2002, helping to provide increased affordable housing opportunities to many very low to moderate income residents.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that support increasing economic opportunities and enhancing the quality of life of rural Americans. As a venture capital entity, USDA Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure in rural America. For additional information regarding all USDA Rural Development programs, individuals may contact the Agency's Manhattan office at 785-776-7582 or log onto the Agency's website at: www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks